

they wish to display the Ten Commandments, many in this body objected to those voluntary displays arguing that our policies should reflect the religion-free beliefs of the 6 or 7 percent who do not believe in God. Fortunately, this body chose otherwise, and during our debates on encouraging a day so that people who wished could join together across the Nation to humble themselves, fast and corporately pray for national reconciliation, again many in this body objected to that, wishing to see our policy reflect solely the anti-religious wishes of those in this Nation who do not believe in God. Again, fortunately the majority of this body chose otherwise, even though we fell short of the necessary two-thirds margin for approval.

Although we continually hear that with government-funded medical care there should be citizen choice when it comes to allowing similar citizen choice in selecting social service programs or criminal rehabilitation programs or educational programs, Members of this body insist that faith-based programs must be excluded from their choices. Interesting. We encourage participation in religion-free programs, but we penalize involvement in faith-based programs. This is simply another example of catering to extremists.

Frankly, despite what some Members of the body may claim, we are not required to conduct government as if God did not exist. In the first official speech ever delivered by President George Washington, he urged us to seek policies which openly acknowledge God. He explained, and I quote:

"It would be peculiarly improper to omit in this first official act my fervent supplications to that almighty being who rules over the universe. No people can be bound to acknowledge and adore the invisible hand which conducts the affairs of men more than those of the United States. We ought to be no less persuaded that the propitious, favorable smiles of heaven can never be expected on a Nation that disregards the eternal rules of order and right which heaven itself has ordained."

And in his farewell address 8 years later, he reiterated his policy declaring, quote:

"Of all the habits and dispositions which lead to political prosperity, religion and morality are indispensable supports. The mere politician ought to respect and cherish them. Can it be a good policy which does not equally include them?"

Patrick Henry, one of the leading individuals responsible for the Bill of Rights similarly declared:

"The great pillars of all government and of social life are virtue, morality and religion. This is the armor, my friend, and this alone that renders us invincible."

Even Benjamin Franklin reminded the delegates at the Constitutional Convention, quote:

"All of us have observed frequent instances of a superintending Providence in our favor, and have we now forgotten that powerful friend, or do we imagine we no longer need his assistance? Without his convincing aid we shall succeed in this political building no better than the builders of Babel, and we ourselves shall become a reproach and byword down to future ages."

Very simply, it was never intended and never envisioned that this body should pursue its policies with the practical denial of the existence of God. Yet this is what many in the body are demanding. We heard their criticism during discussion on the Ten Commandments bill, on the resolution calling for a day of humiliation, prayer and reconciliation and on the juvenile justice bill; and not only did they criticize these measures, they even had the shameless gall to tell us that the Constitution demanded that we show favoritism toward nonreligion. They told us that the First Amendment mandate on separation of church and state could not be satisfied if we passed policies which acknowledge God.

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It is time for those critics to reread the Constitution which they swore to uphold. Nowhere does the First Amendment, or, for that matter, any part of the Constitution, mention anything about a separation of church and state, but it does guarantee in its own words the free exercise of religion. Yet some in this body would deny citizens rights which do appear in the Constitution because of a phrase which does not.

It is time for this body to get back to upholding the actual wording of the Constitution, rather than the wording of revisionists who would reread our Constitution.

Mr. PITTS. Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the gentleman from North Carolina for his very informative comments and for reminding us of the quotes from our founders, Washington, Franklin and others.

I want to say a final thank you to all the participating Members tonight. It has been a real inspiration to listen to each one of the Members as they shared the very words of our founding documents and our Founding Fathers regarding the First Amendment.

As we have listened to these words, it becomes crystal clear that, to the extent that the First Amendment addresses the interaction between public life and religious belief, it is this: That the only thing the First Amendment prohibited was the Federal establishment of a national denomination. The freedom of religion, therefore, is to be protected from encroachment by the state, by the government, not the other way around.

Mr. Speaker, the words of our founding fathers are many, from Washington, to Franklin, to Madison, to Jefferson and others. Each one of these men was fully committed to the pri-

mary role that religion played in public life and in private life, yet without the establishment of one particular denomination.

So, my friends, as we continue to consider the many policies that lie before us, like Charitable Choice, like Opportunity Scholarships for children who go to religious schools, like government contracting with faith-based institutions, even the posting of the Ten Commandments on public property, let us do so with the true intention of the framers in mind. That intention was to allow religion both to flourish and to inform public life, yet still without naming a particular national or Federal religion or denomination. That is fully possible. Instead of shutting it out and denying even the purely practical solution that it offers, let us not be afraid of the good that religion can and does bring to public life. Indeed, it has helped to build a great Nation.

LEAVE OF ABSENCE

By unanimous consent, leave of absence was granted to:

Ms. MCKINNEY (at the request of Mr. GEPHARDT) for today through the end of business on October 6 on account of a death in the family.

Mrs. FOWLER (at the request of Mr. ARMEY) for today until 6:30 p.m. on account of medical reasons.

Mrs. CHENOWETH-HAGE (at the request of Mr. ARMEY) for today until 7:00 p.m. on account of her wedding.

SPECIAL ORDERS GRANTED

By unanimous consent, permission to address the House, following the legislative program and any special orders heretofore entered, was granted to:

(The following Members (at the request of Mrs. CHRISTENSEN) to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material:)

Mr. LIPINSKI, for 5 minutes, today.

Ms. WATERS, for 5 minutes, today.

Mrs. CLAYTON, for 5 minutes, today.

Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas, for 5 minutes, today.

(The following Members (at the request of Mr. ISAKSON) to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material:)

Mr. MCINNIS, for 5 minutes, today.

Mr. KASICH, for 5 minutes, today.

Mr. SMITH of Michigan, for 5 minutes, today and October 6.

Mr. PAUL, for 5 minutes, today.

ENROLLED BILL SIGNED

Mr. THOMAS, from the Committee on House Administration, reported that that committee had examined and found truly enrolled a bill of the House of the following title, which was thereupon signed by the Speaker:

H.R. 2084. An act making appropriations for the Department of Transportation and related agencies for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2000. and for other purposes.